The Seed Sower.

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Brotherhood.

Help thou thy brother on!
If light has come to thee,
Disclosing stepping-stones,
Enabling thee to see
Clearer the way, as in
The onward march we move,
Show him the guiding light!
Reach out thy hand in love,
And help thy brother on!

If thou hast heard a call,
Strong and true and sweet,
Urging thee ever on,
Quick'ning thy lagging feet,
Oh, bid him listen, too,
That he the voice may hear!
The light will brighter glow,
And more the call will cheer,
Helping thy brother on!

God never Late.

Not so in haste, my heart;
Have faith in God, and wait:
Although He linger long,
He never comes too late.

He never comes too late;
Nor grudge the hours that roll;
The feet that wait for God
Are soonest at the goal.

Are soonest at the goal,
That is not gained by speed;
Then hold thee still, my heart,
For I shall wait His lead.

B. T.

Signs: Wisdom: and Christ.

BY THE REV. J. M. LLOYD THOMAS,

HIGH PAVEMENT CHAPEL, NOTTINGHAM.

I. COR. i. 22.—"Jews asks for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling block, and unto Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

Once more the wheel of time seems to have turned full cycle, and history repeats itself. All the parties mentioned in our text are represented in our own day—the seekers after signs, the searchers after philosophic wisdom, and those to whom Christ is still the power of God and the wisdom of God.

When rationalism had worked its full destructiveness in ancient Rome, and the popular religion had been so discredited that the State augurs plied their trade with their tongues in their cheeks, and met each other in the street with a knowing smile; then "Neo-Platonism, with its spiritual ecstasies, and Orphic and Chaldaic mysteries, with their theurgic rites, flowed into the world's capital to fill the aching void." Then sprang up guilds and secret societies, devoted to the pursuit of things occult and darkly superstitious. Then was offered that pathetic tribute to the awful power of religion over the souls of men—a grief-stricken admission of the ineptitude and impotence and futility of the attempt of the mere intellect to

satisfy the hunger that preyed upon the heart with the fangs of famine. For the love of philosophic wisdom had availed not, except to shew the melancholy nobility of a Marcus Aurelius, of men too great to become superstitious, too proud, even in their humility, to become as little children, too sternly, tragically earnest to give up the quest of Truth, too securely and soundly based to be swept and carried away by the voluptuous dance of the world.

A bleak and barren Monotheism could not touch them deeply, much less renew them with a saving faith. The amiable poetry of paganism, the current natural religion, beautiful as a dream, did but gild the grossness of vices it was too weak to destroy. To such a world Christ, through the labours of Paul and other apostolic missionaries, became the power of God and the wisdom of God.

A notice recently appeared of a book, which was called one of the most remarkable books published in recent years, on the beginnings of Christianity. In this work, the author undertakes to shew that "what Paul preached was not teaching of Christ, or teaching about Christ, but Christ Himself." . . . The Gospel was not a doctrine. "It contained no theories about the facts declared, or the blessings offered. It included no moral precepts. As announced . . . its chief points were the nature of God, the corruption of the world, the sending of Christ, the death of Christ. . . . His resurrection and elevation to the position of Lord, and His return . . . to judgment; and the offer to believers of reconciliation with God, forgiveness of sins, and salvation." This, we are told, was what Paul preached, and he preached it not with wisdom of words, not with rhetorical skill, but in sincerity and simplicity and directness of purpose he offered the gift of a Life, not signs or wonders, not the vain wisdom of the schools, but Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

This may or may not be a true account of Paul's activities, but it is at least most suggestive even to those of us who can only accept the central theme of this preaching, stripped of the greater part of its Judaic trimming. It is suggestive for us moderns, because however optimistic we may be we cannot call our age an age of faith. The cultured classes, men and women of scholarship and research, where they have not abandoned religion, and devoted themselves exclusively to metaphysics and psychology and ethics, regard our Christian faith too often as merely one of the many interesting subjects that may be discussed and criticised and analysed like the Autumn Art Exhibition or the season's Drama. They have not quite ceased to possess Religion, but Religion has ceased to possess them with saving and uplifting power.

The less educated, the average reading public, eager for information, and intelligent enough to know its general bearing, these take it for granted that physical science has undermined the old faith. They may not know how it can have done this, they cannot reason it out, but they are suspicious of being tricked into belief, of appearing as the victims of credulity, and they know that doubt and denial come to them, as to all men, bearing the endorsement of great names. Sometimes pride and vanity impel them to accept the conclusions of learned possessors of brilliant genius, thinking that, by becoming their echo, some of their glory will be reflected upon themselves. Sometimes love of truth prompts them to make noble sacrifices, and pluck out with pain from their breasts consolations and hopes which they have come to regard as vain and illusory. But, whatever the cause of our unfaith may be, we find in our modern civilisation many of the characteristics of the ancient world. We find the same hungry zest for the voluptuous pleasures of sense, the same dreams of empire, the same servile deference to wealth, the same admiration for the unscrupulous man of iron and the military hero, the same pious tenderness within the cosy circle of the family, accompanied by a strange callousness and inability to sacrifice for the woes of the street and the outside world. Now, as then, we see on the one hand opulence and luxury, and on the other squalor and misery. Even the well-meaning are paralysed in their efforts to do good by doubt as to how good may be done —doubt as to private charities, doubt as to public benevolence, doubts and fears as to the proper functions of the State. And thus afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, the devout spirits of our time become ready victims of the first grand impostor who can confidently undertake to direct and absolve their

consciences, or who can offer a harbour of refuge from the storms of theological controversy, or make an end of this consuming labour, this restless torment of thought, and guarantee with due evidence of signs and wonders some abiding calm and peace of soul. Once more there is the avid embrace of a crude supernaturalism. Psychical research passes from a serious study into an up-to-date affectation, and the solid data for the solution of life and death problems are furnished by ghost-stories, spiritualism, clairvoyance, table-rapping, planchette, telepathy, faith-healing, and theosophy—things interesting enough in their own way, and, moreover, to be seriously examined by serious men; but hardly as yet the data on which to hazard one's faith, hardly as yet the food and sustenance with which to nourish a starving soul into vigorous life. Yet this retreat into the occult and the mysterious affords us convincing testimony that materialism has overleaped itself, and has not even the advantage any longer of being fashionably advanced.

The same tendency to cultured credulity expresses itself within the Christian Church in the modern recrudescence of sacerdotalism. Brain-sick of thinking, heart weary of loveless speculation, the mind gathers up its last remnant of strength to make the final sacrifice, and prostrate itself at the foot of the priest, who can at least, pronounce an audible and perhaps consolatory benediction. Poor tortured hearts, that strive to extinguish God as the light of the intellect in order to regain Him as the love of the heart! Others indeed will hazard all for truth's sake, and engrave upon their wills the resolute, half-defiant vow that Huxley entered in his private diary, "to smite all humbugs, however big; to give a nobler tone to science; to set an example of abstinence from petty, personal controversies, and of toleration for everything but lying." Many of these pass out of religion, feeling that all that remains to them is ethical culture—if indeed that can long remain, remain, that is, as a life of enthusiasm, or as anything but the pale wisdom of the Greeks. For what after all is Truth unless it be taken as a whole, as something far higher than "a mere self-centred splendour" of the intellect, unless indeed it be something more than a mere logical consistency, something which has a deep and "necessary connection with those stirrings of the soul from which . . . the impulse to seek it first proceeded."

So our age, weary and worn with a futile search after Truth of Thought, strives in various ways — ways sometimes tortuous, sometimes sordid, sometimes heroic, strives for Truth of Life. Some ask for signs, some seek after wisdom, some are still called to find in Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. To which of these parties do we and our community belong? Whither do we tend? Where shall we find God more clearly manifest than in our common humanity?—in the chosen souls that tower as peaks above the expanse of history. For surely the Spirit whom we worship is at least as intelligibly revealed in the nobility of human nature and human self-sacrifice, as in the fine arts, or the dying lights of sunset, or the resplendent colours of an autumn landscape!

Shall we see God in Nature—in "earth, ocean, air, beloved brotherhood?" shall we claim that He utters His word in the silence of our own souls, and proceed to deny or ignore the "authentic tidings" of Himself given in the great personalities of the world, and especially in Him who was for Paul, and may be for us, the power of God and the wisdom of God?

Not through any mere reconstruction of Christological doctrine; not through any loud protestations of Lord! Lord! but through the finding of Him in the heart of a friend, in the daily sacrifices of common life, in the short and simple annals of the poor, "in great books and great examples, in the gathering fulness of spiritual utterance through the history of literature, in the self-denying love which we have known from the cradle, in the moralising influences of civil life, in the closer fellowship of the Christian society, in common worship, in the message of the preachers, through which, amid diversity of tongues, one spirit still speaks." Here Christ still lives and loves and makes perpetual sacrifice, and if the Spirit of Life, which was in Christ, does not become our own, shall we not say, as has been said, that it is because "the heart has a darkness of its own, some unconquered selfishness which prevents its relation to him being one of sincerity and truth.'

All this dreary catalogue of our modern intellectual difficulties is after all what Green said it was, "the foppery of men who want new excuses for old sins." What we need is not more argument, but another Paul, who shall come neither with philosophy, nor yet with science, but with the foolishness of preaching—who shall recall us from the vanities of our intellectual theories to the burning realities of life—who shall come not with a mere exposition of the teachings of Christ—barren repetitions of the idle formula, "the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God," empty and meaningless on the lips of most Christians; nor yet with teachings about Christ—modern Christologies and fine-spun subtleties, that shrivel up in the fires of the first temptation—who shall come not with these sterile theories of a day, but with a *Life*, a Life that can possess and absorb us and beget us anew as children of God.

The one thing that our human nature most readily responds to is a kindred human nature, exalted and transfigured by the felt consciousness of God. The one thing that most certainly lifts Duty beyond the pale of academic discussion to the awful sublimity of a divine commandment, is a human life that in this world of "lust and iron" has ascended its bloody Calvary, and commended its spirit into the hands of God. The one invincible power that can break the hardened heart—

> "but break it as a field
> Is by the plough up-broken for the corn,"

is Love, that even in hideous death could not be turned to bitterness.

Aye! the one thing, when all else has failed, that can redeem us from the power of evil, from treachery to the Truth, from all mean compromise and cynicism, and from "the contagion of the world's slow stain," is the vision of a Human Life of unswerving, daring faith in the omnipotence of goodness, a life of reckless rectitude, and of Trust Triumphant in the loving purposes of the Most High. God in His mercy and long forbearance has sent us more than one such life; but of all lives I know of none so supremely great, so undimmed in splendour and moving majesty, so strong, so deep, so altogether manly, so resplendently glorious in Love, as the Life of Christ.

May God call us to be of those chosen ones, who know the unsearchable riches of that Life, so that if the day come when all philosophies and theologies and Christologies shall sound in our ears as mere "chatterings of the teeth," we may still kneel at the foot of the Cross, and looking up behold "Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God."

Letters to a Ministerial Nephew.

THE SERVICE v. THE SERMON.

My dear Bob,—I observe that lately in conversation and in two or three of your public utterances you have been girding at the sermon and magnifying the service as if there were some necessary antagonism between the two. For some few years past it has been rather the thing with young fellows fresh from college to emphasise worship, its orderly and beautiful conduct, by speaking with some contempt of the undue importance given to the sermon by our forefathers. Not before it was wanted we have undertaken in various ways to brighten our services and to make the worship of the church at once more reverent and more attractive. But why this damning of the sermon with faint praise? If the discourse of an ancient Hebrew prophet may be regarded as an element in the round of worship why not the discourse of a modern English prophet, *i.e.*, the sermon of the minister? The sermon is, indeed, in its wrong place altogether if it is not also part of the worship. I do not say this because I am sympathetic with those people—if they really exist—who would squeeze the worship of the church to death in order that the sermon may have room to magnify itself almost without limit. I do not care to consider the old question of debate, which shall be the hub or the wheel—the worship or the sermon? I entirely agree with the modern zeal for the improvement of the worship, but not at the price of belittling the sermon. The sermon may well be shortened from what it was over thirty years ago; it may well share in the general improvement which marks our services, but any attempt on the part of our Free Churches to relegate it to a back seat will only end in disaster. The importance of preaching to our Free Churches

can hardly be overestimated. Great ecclesiastical churches have other sources of strength which are denied to us. State Churches, like the English, and highly organised churches, like the Presbyterian and Methodist, can carry along a company of poor preachers on the full tide of the denominational life, and suffer but little from an incompetent pulpit. But we—we have no priestly functions and pretensions to fall back upon, no ancient and stately liturgy to conduct, full of memories and linked on with the devotion and association of centuries, and which many find sufficient for their spiritual need; we have no church system which will bear up and on feeble vessels. Our church buildings do not help us by their architecture, or their sculpture, or their paintings. Unless we have on the one hand a truly worshipful spirit, which will make the barest and most unæsthetic service a spiritual reality, and on the other hand a powerful pulpit, we are nowhere. The clever journalists who tell us in their oracular way that the modern sermon is an anachronism, are simply voicing the feeling of a little clique of superior people in London clubs. Persons who invite the clergyman to delete the sermon are not as a rule found in church at any time. It may be that to depreciate the sermon is to prove oneself up-to-date in cynical circles, but it is strangely out of keeping with the facts of modern life, for never was good preaching more eagerly listened to than to-day. Never was it more in demand. Scores of men may be found in London who never fail of crowded audiences, while almost every provincial town has its Maclaren, or Watson, or Jowett, or Campbell. The sermon of to-day is indeed a very different thing from the good sermon of 100 years ago. No one would now listen even to a Chalmers or an Irving. John Wesley himself would have to change his style and method to get a hearing in City Road Chapel. Preaching has grown crisp, sententious, epigrammatic. And it may be that the short sermon will conquer, just as the short story has conquered. But then the short sermon that tells is more difficult to prepare, costs the author more in sweat of brain and heart, says more, is greater as an example of the art of preaching than anything the preachers of other days knew. For such sermons there will always be congregations, and it is such sermons our Free Churches need. It is of the feeble sermons people are sick. And our Free Churches especially will suffer from any enfeebling of the pulpit. Depend upon it, the attempt to magnify the service at the expense of the sermon is a great and disastrous mistake. Both are essential to the fulness of worship. My dear Bob, don't join the chatter of the pulpit failures, who talk about the "comparative unimportance of the sermon." It is not at all cynical, but just the simple truth, that the ministers who take up that line are as a rule just the men who have never learned how to preach. They illustrate in a way never contemplated by the apostle, "the foolishness of preaching." Give them not your countenance, O, nephew mine! but believe that preaching may be as powerful a factor in the religious life of the new century as it has been in any of the centuries of olden time.

Your affectionate Uncle,

THEOPHILUS BROWN.

Parsifal,

BY THE REV. EDGAR I. FRIPP, B.A.

The scenery of "Tannhäuser" is that of Central Germany—of the Thuringian Forest and the Wartburg. "Lohengrin" takes us into the Netherlands, the old country of the swan at the mouths of the Rhine and the Scheldt. In "Parsifal" we are once more in a new and romantic region. The Wartburg and Antwerp are far away. We are among the mountains of Spain, where Charlemagne, with his northern warriors resisted the invasion of the Arabs, and lost his famous son Roland. When the Roman Empire fell it was overrun by Germanic hosts on the north and by Asiatic hordes on the east and south. The latter were Mahometans, and their advance into Europe threatened the downfall of Christianity. The Crescent seemed likely to prevail over the Cross. Arab bravery, learning, art and religion were more than a match for the decaying culture and faith of Rome. But Christianity, capturing the northern invaders—Franks, Germans, Danes, and English—made of them a new soldiery of the Cross, which encountered and repulsed the

Saracen. The Pyrenees were the scene of this life-and-death struggle. Goth and Moor fought for the supremacy in the old borderland of Spain. Two young and powerful elements in European history, Gothic energy and purity and Arabian fancy, met together in the hills and valleys of this beautiful neighbourhood and decided the future of the Empire. And the Gospel, such as it was, gained the victory—Nazareth defeated Mecca—preserving the continuity of the Aryan races in Europe. Yet the Saracen left his mark upon us; and among his bequests was a quickened imagination, which shaped nearly all the great romances of the Middle Ages, including the story of Wagner's "Parsifal."

In the Pyrenees was the cave of the evil magician *Klingsor*. It was on the slope facing the Arab kingdom, and was the secret home of Moorish magic and sensuality. Among the Christians Mahomet, shortened to Mahoun, became a name for the Devil. It was quite unjust, but natural enough at that period. To pull down the Cross, was to the Christendom of the Middle Ages, simply the putting up of the kingdom of Satan. So *Klingsor* was a kind of Satan, and his cave was a stronghold of Satanic influence. It was Castle Marvellous—marvellous in devilish lore and witchcraft. The Arabs were the best astrologers, scientists, and physicians, as well as the best story-tellers of the time, which facts were proofs, in the eyes of the Church, of dealings with the Devil. For centuries science had to endure misunderstanding and persecution; and the arts of life, which received a speedy impulse from the Arabs, were associated in the Christian consciousness with effeminacy and lust. So *Klingsor's* underground court was the centre of unbelief, of deadly knowledge, and of unbridled profligacy. There in bondage to her master, was *Kundry*, a hideous, wandering, infidel witch, who could, for evil ends, make herself of an unearthly loveliness, and was said even to have met Jesus on the road to Calvary and derided him. She served *Klingsor*, aiding him in the destruction of the knights of the Holy Graal, who dwelt on Mont Salvat—the Hill of Salvation—on the opposite and Gothic side of the mountains. Yet such is her woman's nature, and such is the influence on her of Mont Salvat, that her service to *Klingsor* is always followed by a self-hatred, and a moody, half-crazy devotion to the men whom she has ruined.

In my paper last month I spoke of the Holy Graal. It was the cup used at the Last Supper, when Jesus said "Drink ye of this wine, for it is my blood," and used again, as was believed, to catch his blood when his side was pierced, at the crucifixion, by the soldier's spear. Both the Graal and the Spear were treasured, according to the story, in Mont Salvat, and were only visible to a few. When seen, the sacred cup appeared with wine in it, like blood, which throbbed in mystic light, as a sign to the knighthood of the presence and favour of God.

Now, the guardian of the Graal and the Spear was very old, and about to die and leave his sacred office to his son, *Amfortas*; but *Amfortas*, in an attack on the castle of the sorcerer *Klingsor*, had been met and betrayed by *Kundry*, and had only escaped with the loss of the spear and with an incurable wound.

This is the situation at the opening of the opera. The prelude ushers in the different elements of the story—the Last Supper, the pain of Calvary, the evil joys of *Klingsor's* cave, the agony of sin, the strain of hopeless endeavour, and finally the peace of pardon and the blessed vision of the Graal.

A wounded spirit who can heal? That is the central idea of the poem, an idea which takes us to the very heart of the Christian Gospel. We see the sun rise on the outside of Mont Salvat. All is peaceful and beautiful. But there is no peace within the sacred halls. An old knight and two young ones welcome the dawn with prayer. Then they talk of the maimed King and his wound; and the wild *Kundry* breaks in upon them, with a rush of sound—a weird, unhallowed being, her long hair streaming behind her. She has escaped from *Klingsor*; she is in her penitent mood; she will do anything, in her fierce way, to cure the harm she has committed; she offers a rare balsam which she has stolen from the Arabian store of marvels. But it is useless. It cannot heal. The king, *Amfortas*, himself, is brought forth and presented with her ointment; but it needs a greater wonder to restore him. The hand that betrays another into sin may do much to make it right: it may to some extent lessen its physical consequences; but it cannot of itself heal the spiritual sore: it

cannot make the guilt less: it cannot bring forgiveness and peace. *Amfortas* might say of *Kundry's* balsam, in the words of Lady Macbeth, that "all the perfumes of Arabia" could not "sweeten" him. No; it needed a medicine from Heaven. There must be an *atonement*, a *redemption*, a lifting of the sinner's sorrow to God, and a descent of the divine mercy to earth, through someone who can be good enough and suffer enough to feel the price of it. A heavenly voice speaks from the sky to the heart of the stricken king: "*Wait for my chosen One, who is guiltless and innocent, pity-enlightened.*"

This introduces us to *Parsifal*. He is the hero whose guiltlessness and innocence will enable him to enter the den of the magician and withstand his unholy charms, and whose pity will bring thence salvation to the afflicted.

At first his simplicity misleads. He is thought dull and foolish. For a time he is merely the natural man, not knowing good and evil, ignorant of the troubles and mysteries of sinfulness. He does not understand the Holy Graal. He does not know himself or where he has come from, or whose child he is. And he is thrust out of Mont Salvat as unworthy of the Christian brotherhood. He is despised and rejected of men, and by good men, as only fit to mind geese.

So be it. So it often is in the world. The soul takes its time to awake. First the natural, then the spiritual. Few of us when we start out in life know who we really are, what our true parentage is, or what mysterious problems are within us, or what greater mysteries will solve these problems and reveal to us our true being. We see *Parsifal* merely as the young huntsman, knowing nothing, a beautiful and healthy young creature, akin to the steed and the stag. *Parsifal* the hero, the saint, the redeemer, has yet to be born.

And this is how he was born.

He wanders one day into *Klingsor's* domain. Without knowing it he is drawn into the haunted region where the old deceiver lies in wait to tempt and wound him, if he can, with the Spear which he had wrested from *Amfortas*, hoping thereby to gain possession of the Graal too. This secured, Mont Salvat will totter and fall, the Cross will be beaten to earth, the harem will triumph over the monastery, and the Spirit of Evil will reign.

On his entrance *Parsifal* is confronted by a company of lewd old knights who account him a fool. But his folly is stronger than their wisdom. He scatters them with ease. His pure, strong youth goes out with conquering force against their effeminacy and feeble lies. Next he is led into a magic garden, such a garden as the Mahometan mind pictured in heaven, a Paradise of voluptuous pleasure, dazzling and enchanting to the senses. Trees breathing odours, flowers, and maidens dressed like flowers and scarcely distinguishable from them, and soft enervating strains of music, bewilder him with their loveliness. In the midst appears *Kundry*, in servitude again, doing the Devil's work, transformed into a young and matchless Queen of beauty—type of the old enemy of manhood, the Strange Woman, the Great Destroyer, alluring and irresistible to the unclean. She conquers kings and princes, scholars, soldiers and prophets, young and old. She has wounded *Amfortas* himself, the keeper of the Holy Graal. Yet she fails with *Parsifal*. He finds her young, but without innocence; beautiful, but without holiness; a lady, without love; and he is repelled by her. She becomes odious to him. Then she employs artifice. She will even betray him through his love for his mother. Contradiction of contradictions, the harlot will take the mother's place! And then, such are the inconsistencies of her nature, her artifice becomes passion. She falls in love with him *for his goodness*. "O, to be loved by one who is good;" she thinks, "what would that make of me? To win his pure love would release me from *Klingsor*, and save me from corruption. I would be changed to incorruption." But this new devotion fails also, and she grows deperate. She is baffled, and she knows it. He thrusts her from him, guileless still, but no longer a fool, his eyes opened to the horrors of evil, aghast and loathing. She calls furiously to *Klingsor*, who, stepping from his hiding-place, hurls the Spear. But *Parsifal* catching it, and holding it firmly in his grasp,—the sacred Spear of God, the weapon of the soldier of Christ,—prevails. The Alhambra-like castle of *Klingsor* falls to pieces, the garden fades, and the flower-girt maidens wither and perish.

So passes the outward glory of the world, and nothing is left but the victorious soul of *Parsifal*, and the spirit of the penitent and grovelling *Kundry*.

Then, after long wandering, *Parsifal* once more seeks the Graal, knowing what it means. It is the vision of God to the pure and the brave. It is the sign of the Real Presence on earth. To know God, to feel the sacredness of life and the awfulness of sin, to feel the cleansing sanctity that fills the universe, to see the light of God shining in dark places and throbbing as with the beatings of a heart,—the light of God, mystic and wonderful and red with infinite Love,—we must not trust to creeds, nor to mere beliefs of any sort, nor to priests or their sacraments; but we must be noble, we must love and work and conquer and forgive, and have in us, through the grace of God, some momentary likeness to the great King. *Parsifal* has this divinity in his flesh; and with it he carries healing and mercy to the maimed *Amfortas*. He touches his wound with the recovered Spear, and gives him rest. That same Spear of Christ, which pierces the mind with the conviction of sin, which enters into the conscience, and stabs it deep with a gaping wound, is the only weapon that can soothe and heal. It is the symbol of the love of God, which, while it sheds the blood of Jesus, lets loose a redeeming flood of grace and mercy upon a sinful world. It is the weapon of the Christian warrior, who takes it with him in his right hand and conquers evil, smiting wicked men with a sense of their wickedness, leaving them for a long time, for years perhaps, with an open wound of misery, but at length, coming again, makes them whole. He brings at last the message of mercy. Only God, nothing human, only God and His infinite forgiveness, can give balm and blessing.

And thus *Parsifal* obtains the guardianship of the Graal. What once, as the natural man, he beheld with blank astonishment, has become to him a glorious reality. The mysteries of religion are mysteries still, but are the most certain facts in the universe. He believes in the Invisible and the Miraculous. He knows the Real Presence, which is the one true Sacrament. He carries the Unseen about with him. The Miracle is perpetual in his own heart. The Transubstantiation is in his daily life. Wherever he goes it is Mont Salvat. And in every fine thought and gracious deed feels the mystery of the mingling of God with man.

Applied Religion.

IV.—INTERNATIONAL RELIGION.

Life in God and union there.

Philosophers and men of science find unfailing occupation in a search for the origins of religion. But it is no more possible to demonstrate the origins of religion than it is to demonstrate the origins of life. It is undoubted now that all human races, however low, have some sense of an Unknown, some conscious relationship to a Supreme Being who is all-powerful in their lives. And, just as we can roughly indicate certain stages through which life has evolved in its ascending complexity: for example, worm, fish, amphibian, mammal, man; so can we roughly indicate certain stages through which religion has evolved: for example, ghost-worship, ancestor-worship, polytheism, monotheism, and monism. And, just as we find such divergent types as molluscs, reptiles, birds, and men, existing side by side in the world at the present day; so do we find variously developed types of religion persisting among the various races of mankind. The Bushmen worship ghosts; the Chinese worship ancestors; the Hindus worship personified forces of nature; orthodox Christians worship three mental images; Jews, Mohammedans, and Theists worship one man-like God; Pantheists and Monists worship one God in everything. Broadly, each race has evolved for itself that type of religion for which it is most fitted; and it persists in that type so long as it feels no need for a higher type. Natural selection and survival of the fittest reign even in matters of religion.

What, then, should be the attitude of these types of religion, these various faiths, to one another? In the first place, proselytizing is to be deprecated. It is surely absurd, and somewhat impertinent, that religionists of one race should seek to force their beliefs on persons of an alien race and faith. It is much as though a man were to look upon the

skylark, singing hymns above the sunlit meadows, as less dear to God than he is; and were on that account to catch and pluck the bird, and dress it in small baby clothes, and try to make it suck a humanized milk out of a patent feeding-bottle. Surely a good skylark is, in its kind, just as pleasing to God as a good man in his kind. But let us in fairness recognise the justification that there has been for the meddlesomeness of Christian missions. The original followers of Jesus, feeling intensely happy, and unaccountably uplifted, were impelled to communicate to others their good tidings of great joy. And for this one can have nothing but admiration. But by degrees a dark superstition crept in; the Christians began to believe that all who did not accept a certain presentation of Christ's teaching would be damned to all eternity, whether they had heard of that presentation or not. Then the Christians were, in common humanity, bound to proselytize. Indeed, anyone who believed this awful doctrine and yet refrained from spreading what, with unconscious irony, was called the Gospel, proclaimed himself a selfist and a coward. But now that the fog of that superstition is lifting, never to return, one would gladly see the end of missions as they are commonly interpreted. That they have achieved so little in spite of all their efforts is some proof that those efforts have been misapplied. Their converts are, to use another bird simile, like talking parrots, able, indeed, to display some semblance of their teachers' quality, but none the less devoid of it, mere sports that helplessly die out when left alone. Further, there is the old reflection that foreign missions are somewhat out of place while there is such a glaring contrast between profession and practice at home. For many a year to come the most ardent missionary will find plenty to do if he tries to be thorough in the application of religion to his own life, and if he endeavours to induce others around him to do the like. And foreign missions are, after all, quite unnecessary. Men of all faiths are worshipping in their various ways one and the same God. Surely that God can well afford to overlook ritual and credal differences, and does accept worship of all kinds gladly so long as it is sincere. "He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." Moreover, the only true missioning consists in living the life. No amount of controversy or preaching can effect so much as a sincere and consistent outwarding of what the heart and soul hold best. This alone can convince those who cling to lower faiths of the advantages of a higher faith. The method may seem too slow for many people. They want to have big results that can be put down statistically and tabulated in the missionary magazines. But the Highest seems to favour slow and silent methods as a rule. Nor is there need for hurry. Those who do not attain to the purest known religion in this life, will attain to it in a future life. God has all eternity to work in. Our fellowmen will not be damned for ever just because in their present brief existence they have failed to see quite eye to eye with us. Sooner or later they are bound to come to God; they are bound to become perfect, even as their Father in heaven is perfect.

But ought we not to make some effort to let our brothers all over the world share in the faith that has brought to us our joy and our calm of soul? Certainly we ought. But here, as in other departments of life, all that is feasible is to give to every man full opportunity for his development. We dare not capture him, and force him to develop along our particular lines. All that we can insist on is freedom, freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of the press. Then the seeds of our bliss will be borne on every wind, and, whenever they alight upon a fitted soil, they will there take root and grow. The most aspiring souls in every nation will seize those truths that best befit them; each, rising higher and higher, will find out his spiritual kindred; together they will gradually raise to their mutual, loftier level the nation and the faith to which they all belong. And here, indeed, enlightened men of alien faiths may aid; for, by studying the religious development of a given race, and so discerning what is purest and most vital in it, they may further the reforming spirits in their efforts to purify and strengthen that faith which has proved itself most congruent to the nation in question. For example, it is surely better to support the Brahma Samaj in its endeavour to purify the old profound religion of the Hindus than to trick the natives out of their own tried faith into an imitation of our imitative Western Christianity. Nor can the study of alien

religions be valueless to ourselves. Always, the doing of what is right brings to us undreamed of and subsidiary rewards, and it is so here. For, however pure and fervent we may think our faith, we can learn much from every other form of religion that exists. From the Chinese we may gather a strict and reasonable morality; from the Brahmans a deep and comprehensive metaphysic; from the Buddhists an ideal of unlimited self-sacrifice; from the Mohammedans a hardy temperance; and from the Hebrews—what is there in that which we call our religion that has not been derived from the Hebrews? Were not the Nazarene and his apostles Jews, no less truly than were David and Isaiah? The truth seems to be that every form of religion is to some extent good, and every form of religion is to some extent bad. Let us take our good where we can find it, and yet be always on our guard against imagining that what is good for us is necessarily good for others. If this be done it will not be difficult to detect, running through the rosary of the faiths, the strong unending cord of belief in the Fatherhood of God.

Now, this common element of belief makes possible for us something like an international worship. Social worship must be always, to some extent, a compromise; for no two souls can hold exactly the same shade of opinion about religion. In every act of combined worship each soul must exercise a process of selection, a picking-out of what is most in accordance with its own belief, an ignoring of what is superfluous or discordant. This habit of selection makes it possible for the soul to derive much spiritual momentum from collective worship of the most unlikely kinds. And, for those who by circumstance are compelled to live among far brothers of an alien race and faith, it is surely better that they should join in the alien worship than that they should remain apart in coldness and in spiritual pride. Indeed, the higher and purer a man's religion is, the easier is this spiritual communion; for his faith is so simple and pervasive that he can find it under every disguise of creed and ritual in every land. It should be possible for him to adore with Maoris their hideous idol of his ineffable God, to bow with Parsees before the pure and wonder-working fire, to thrill with Romanists at the touch of their sacred bread and wine, to assimilate with Protestants all the hope and righteousness and love that they can extract from their infallible Bible. Everywhere, and with every man, can he worship; finding his God in every symbol that can be devised. Just as he can homage with the throb and sighing of the waves, or with the jubilant triumph of the thunder peal, so can he bow himself in the house of Rimmon and feel wondrously uplifted in the process.

But, that this may be true, two conditions are necessary: first, the house of Rimmon must be really the highest mode of social worship available for him; and, secondly, he must make no secret of his own inner faith when questioned on the subject. Tolerance and sympathy must never be allowed to degenerate into hypocrisy.

Finally, there is one mode of international worship which is open to us all, wherever on the earth we may happen to be placed. In my last paper I suggested how suppliants in any tiny church may merge themselves in the mighty spiritual momentum of the nation. That conception can be realised on an even wider, on a world-wide, scale. All that is necessary is an understanding that, at a given moment, every religious individual on earth shall pray some simultaneous prayer. Suppose the hour of noon to be selected, then, as the earth rotates towards the east, and as the sun stands over the meridian line of every spot in turn, a wave of prayer shall sweep incessantly across the peopled surface of the globe. Think of what the dying Keats once wrote about the tidal wave:

> "The moving waters at their priest-like task
> Of pure ablution round earth's human shores."

Well, even more than sun transcends the moon shall our sun-drawn prayer wave dwarf the moon-drawn tidal wave in catholicity and beneficence. Day and night shall it swell triumphantly, scouring out impurities, no doubt; but, better still, ever whelming in its mass awakened souls and raising them to unimaginable potencies of joyfulness and use.

And what shall be the wording of those world-regenerating prayers? They must be simple, basal, true; all-comprehensive and kindling withal. No one formula is practicable or necessary. The Lord's Prayer will suit most Christians: the sentiment familiar to the readers

of *Brotherhood* will suit many. The following formula may suit some :—

> O God ! enable me to feel my oneness with all things in Thee !
> All-Father ! help me to prove my brotherhood by constant, joyful service !
> Almighty Love ! burn out of me my baseness and make me wholly part of Thy pure flame !

But, whatever words be used, let this regular noon day prayer be tried. It is a simple thing to do ; even simpler than Naaman's "Wash and be clean !" The chosen formula, if carried in the watch-case, may be read and prayed with intensest aspiration, while the clock is slowly chiming twelve. Circumstances may often cause omission of the prayer ; yet few will have joined a dozen times in this communion of all souls before they will find themselves looking forward to its recurrence with a curious yearning. Becoming aware of one of the sanest and most vital forces of the universe, they shall know of a very surety that they are one with all and with God who is all in all. "For this cause we bow our knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he may grant us, according to the riches of his glory, that we may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; . . . . to the end that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of God which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled unto all the fulness of God."

W. Winslow Hall.

Rokeby.

Walter Scott, who, to quote the words of Dr. Whitaker, the learned historian of Richmondshire, "diffused much innocent and elegant pleasure by his writings," has no doubt done much to spread the fame of Rokeby, but it is not at all clear to us where his influence in this respect has told. In the North of England, we believe the beauty of Teesdale, and especially of this part of it, has always been recognised with something like patriotic affection ; and as for the South, we found it hard to prevent our friends there, when we said we were going to Rokeby, from confusing it with Rugby, and pitying us accordingly. In 1811, Mr. Morritt writes to his friend Scott,—"Should I, in consequence of your celebrity, be obliged to leave Rokeby, from the influx of Cockney romancers, artists, illustrators, and sentimental tourists, I shall retreat to Ashestiel, and thus visit on you the sins of your writings. At all events, however, I shall certainly raise the rent of my inn at Greta Bridge, on the first notice of your book, as I hear the people of Callandar have made a fortune by you." The poem was published in 1813, but it is not on record that Mr. Morritt was ever in any danger of being driven from his home. Was it that the Roundheads were unpalatable in fiction, as the poet himself and his friend, Mr. Morritt, thought; or that the poem was bad, as the world thinks (and there are certainly very few nice characters depicted in it) ; or is it that canny Yorkshire is so very much less emotional than Perthshire? Rokeby is, indeed, a show-place, but guides who, on the other side of the Tweed, would spout Sir Walter in the face of every big rock in the path, making us feel what Byron calls "the fatal facility of octosyllabic verse," here do their work in plain prose, and do not injure our pleasure at all. Our guide is an old soldier, who has gone through a campaign in Afghanistan and the defence of Lucknow. We enter the park, which for a quarter of a mile, differs little from any other park. We go through a wicker-gate, and at once come upon "the mountain rent and riven," which, according to Scott, might be imagined as giving a channel to the stream. So far from there being anything like a mountain in the case, everything is on a very small scale, except the trees and the butterburs. What we really see, after emerging from a thicket of yew trees, close by the gate, is a dark-brown river, making its way quietly over a smooth-lying rock-bed, with very stately beech and sycamore trees on one side, and on the other a line of low cliffs, nowhere more than fifty feet in height, half hidden by clumsy sycamores and ivy, and crowned by

Scotch firs above. All this is so beautiful in itself (a fine day being taken for granted), that the vulgar element of size is not needed to awaken our admiration. Scott's exaggeration of scale is, in fact, a survival of the method of description in vogue before his time, when to express any excitement of feeling about what we should call picturesque scenery, it was necessary to speak of all rocks and mountains as if they were always frowning and black, beetling and big. Our forefathers really had no sense of scale in these matters. Daniel Defoe, who travelled in this part of the world, could hardly find words strong enough to express his sense of its terrible wildness. Now-a-days, we might call such scenery dull and gloomy, if we saw it in dull weather, but we should never think of calling it anything worse. In truth, weather cannot be too fine for Rokeby. By noontide or by twilight, a fair summer day makes it grand with colour and strong light and shade. The sunbeam slides through one mass of leaves after another, lights up entanglements of ivy and trailing plants, fills the recessed angles of the limestone crags with soft greenish-golden light, and rests on the warm grey surface of one, while another, perhaps close by, is left, with all its square joints and fissures, in most delicious shadow. Then the water, if the river is low, is of the colour of a topaz, to begin with, and so shallow in many places that the sunbeam can be traced almost right across on the smooth sandstone floor, or flecks it with patches of dazzling light; and over these burning, bright spaces you can see the shadow of the foam-globes pass swiftly, where a current, after having caught against one of the grey stones lying in mid-stream, with a dancing ripple, flows onward, marked by a long, slender chain of eager little foam bubbles. Trees rise high above (the blue of the sky showing vividly amongst their topmost sprays), with a profuse undergrowth of every green thing which flourishes in Teesdale, from sycamores and elms down to roses and honey-suckles, ragwort, wood-spurge, and the brightest of wood-sorrel. Tumbled about beneath these, again, half in and half out of the water, is the wreck of storm and flood, great blocks of stone and pale skeletons of dead trees. A little further on, the limestone wall comes out on the other or left-hand side of the Greta (it is a marked feature in Rokeby scenery that you never get a precipice on both sides of the river-hollow at once, but always find an alternation of sheer cliff on one side, with smooth meadow and rounded bank on the other), and we have on our right hand an open space, occupied in this instance by a yew-grove, of which more anon. Then comes a passage where the actual bed of the stream is deeply trenched, and is altogether composed of huge blocks of mountain limestone, amongst which the water forces its way. As the trees here almost meet overhead, leaving only an irregular strip of sky between them, this is, perhaps, on the whole, the most notable scene in the park.

A few steps further, with or without crossing the Dairy Bridge, bring us to the far-famed junction of the Greta and the Tees. The guide-book grudgingly hints that this scene has been over-praised, and that Devonshire can beat it. We have reason to believe that Turner, who knew what Devonshire can do, did not think so. A point on the right bank of the Greta commands his view. The drawing has been engraved in the Yorkshire series, and belongs now, by Mr. Ruskin's gift, to the University of Oxford. To his repeated praises of this drawing and his estimate of the vast amount of truth which it contains, we humbly subscribe, if we regard it without too much reference to the real scene; but having Greta and her many-channelled waters before us, and taking Turner's work as a representation of them, we must hold that it is a crucial case of the inadequateness of skill and feeling—of genius, in fact—to make up for the want of complete knowledge. Or perhaps we may more justly take the drawing as an instance to show how much less interest was felt in a certain set of truths by a supremely great artist at that time, than would probably be felt by such an artist now. The larger stream of the Tees flows directly towards us, with thick woods and ledges of pale-grey limestone on either side, until it turns aside, as if it were pushed out of its course by the little, impetuous

Greta, and the layers of rock which form its channel. These layers are, it must be owned, very geometrical-looking indeed, and it would try the resources of the greatest composer to give their true character consistently with pleasantness of pictorial effect. From the number and minuteness of their shallow furrows, one might almost imagine that some water-sprite of great power and evil temper had dealt with Greta as Cyrus, in the old Herodotean story, did with a river which put him to much trouble and delay in getting across it. Cyrus "paid off Gyndes," says the historian, by distributing him into so many driblets that an army could cross dry-shod; and Greta, in dry weather, is almost lost in the little conduits which traverse, like veins, in all directions, the pavement of bare grey rock. Turner has almost ignored this level floor, with its exact divisions; he has preferred to dwell on the débris which chokes the river-bed; but he has given us the victory of the Greta over the larger stream, the texture of the sandstone blocks, the plumy toss and fullness of the smaller trees, and above all, the solemn, rigid respectability of the three large elms which guard the house We cannot but feel that the art-power which made the stiffness of these elms pictorial, could have done as much for the complete geological truth of the rock-foreground, had it so willed. The Greta is by no means always shallow. Like the Tees, it is liable to sudden and dangerous Floods. At such times, the river comes down like a solid wall of water, and many are the stories told of hair-breadth escapes. We will tell one with a comical side. William IV., when Duke of Clarence (perhaps Scott's influence told on him), came to see the park, and on the very day when one of these unexpected floods occurred. While he was walking with Mr. Morritt, the water, as if by magic, rose five or six feet. He watched it with great interest, and then turned round and politely thanked his host for the very picturesque surprise he had prepared for him.

A sermon to be preached a second time must be born again. If so how many lives some sermons ought to have.

The Limitations of Marcus Aurelius.

In a fine sonnet Matthew Arnold pays homage to Marcus Aurelius as "the imperial sage, purest of men," who discovered that even in a palace life may be well led. The tribute, so just and true, is recalled to our memory by the elegant little edition of the "Meditations" as translated by Casaubon, published in "The Bibelot Series" (Gay and Bird, 2s. 6d.) The translation is not the most accurate, but it conveys the meaning of the original well enough, and once more suggests to the English reader the high and noble instincts of the great Roman, and brings once again before his mind those great thoughts which occurred to Marcus in the weary night watches on the Danube's shore in the dreary campaign against the barbarian tribes which must have been peculiarly distasteful to the philosophic Emperor. In his interesting work on the Greek poets the late Mr. J. A. Symonds says that these "Meditations" may be taken as summing up for us the ethical and religious ideas of the ancient world. Fundamentally Stoic, they yet rose above the Stoic creed, and they had elements of beauty which that creed did not possess. Mr. Symonds regards them as Stoic-Epicurean, and if we eliminate from our minds the modern notion of Epicureanism as a creed of sensualism, and accept the original ideas of Epicurus alone, we shall probably agree with Mr. Symonds. Rigid moral conduct and a certain art of life according to Nature, with a profound sense of awe and wonder in face of the universe,—these constitute the "note" of Marcus Aurelius.

How is it that in this "purest of men" we find something missing which in the Christian judgment is absolutely essential to the spiritual life of man? From the point of view of conduct there was probably not a martyr who perished in the Flavian Amphitheatre whose daily life could have borne closer scrutiny than that of Marcus Aurelius. From his lofty pedestal he looked down on the festering mass of corruption around him with sincere moral repugnance; he congratulated himself that his private education had

preserved him from the foul taint of the Roman public schools. None could have stood more thoroughly aloof from the sins of that splendid but decaying world. How, then, is it that we can turn to the fierce Tertullian or the fanatical Jerome for a spiritual companionship and solace which we can never get from Marcus? How is it that St. Augustine's "City of God" can inspire us in a way that the City of God which Marcus thought justified as compared with the "dear city of Cecrops" cannot? What is there that is lacking in this Bible of classic wisdom and piety?

The subject is one which might well fill a great treatise, and we can do no more than throw out hints which lead to reflections on the contrast between the pagan and Christian worlds. But the first and chief lack of the Stoic gospel compared with Christianity is the lack in the former of the sense of the infinite in man. The pagan religions regarded man as a finite being whose utmost ideal was to be realised in the State. There was no thought of a side of man's nature which the State or civil society could not provide for and gratify. Hence it is that Aristotle conceives the State as the one means by which provision is made for man's moral being, so that in the State all shall live and live well. So thoroughly did this limited conception of man take hold of the antique world, that when in course of time the Greek political system broke up it was held that moral and spiritual chaos had also come. The city-State, abode of gods and men, had had its moral unity destroyed; the gods had departed, the men were left morally destitute. Stoicism had far transcended this limited idea, but it had not reached the great faith of Christianity. It was between two worlds, and while it had lost the childlike confidence of one, it had not attained the great universal concept of the other. It vaguely saw that there was more in man than the ancient world had supposed; it had freed itself from the picturesque group of legends attaching to the pagan deities, but it had not reached out towards the universal Deity with its heart and mind and soul and strength. It had no hold on the idea that men are partakers in the divine nature and are destined to transcend the limitations of terrestrial existence.

In these shortcomings we find the limitations of Marcus Aurelius, which render his otherwise great and inspiring writings weak in spiritual power. He is still groping in the dark, "seeking after God if haply he might find him," and he is at heart sad because he has not found him. It is needless to say that he attained to what was the highest possible for him. Unable to see that man's nature is so great, so divine, that it cannot be realised in the actual State, however grand, he could see no more in Christianity than a variety of Jewish superstition which might become dangerous to the Roman State, and hence he stained his reputation by persecution of the Church. His political-religious idea was essentially a revival of Roman piety and worship as in the brighter days of the Republic,—an impossible reversion to an earlier type which we see later on in its extreme form under Julian the Apostate, and which is invariably the remedy for existing ills of high-minded men who yet cannot see that the old forms are outgrown and that the new must be accepted. Sincere as was his Theism, and convinced as he was intellectually of the unity of God, yet Marcus imparted a kind of impetus to the outworn pagan mythology. Closely allied as he was to Christian ethics, he yet missed entirely the significance of Christianity. Veiled under the cloud of night, yet with his face resolutely turned towards the dawn, Marcus Aurelius is both a heroic and a tragic figure for whom we feel a mingled love and pity. We love him for his nobility and his faithfulness to the light he knew; we pity him because it was his fate to miss that assurance of faith which to fortitude of soul adds perfect blessedness and peace.

Most people are willing that good should be done by deputy; that *they* should do it is quite another matter. But the world will never be redeemed by deputy. We must give personal trouble, personal sympathy; we must give of our own time and thought to the sore evils of society and not be content with paying a missionary to do these things for us.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

The Christ-Child's Gift to Mere Josephine.

It was Christmas Eve. In the street, children's voices rang out in the frosty air. Some were hurying along with garlands of evergreen, or little fir-trees, soon to be decked with glitering ornaments and gifts; others were singing quaint old hymns from door to door; all were happy—happy.

In the top room of an old house, once a mansion, but now a poor tenement, away from the street with all its noise and gaiety, sat Mère Josephine with folded hands. She had looked sorrow-stricken twenty years ago, when she had first come, a poor lonely woman, to the old German town, and on this Christmas Eve she was still as sorrowful, only daily the lines round her mouth grew harder, and the thin lips looked as if they had forgotten how to smile.

None of her neighbours knew the cause of Mère Josephine's sorrow; indeed they knew nothing at all about her, except that she was a clever lace-mender, and never lacked employment. But she had never talked with them in her spare time, never smiled at the flaxen-haired little ones that played in the court-yard, and had so plainly showed that she wished to be left to herself, that gradually they had ceased to trouble their heads about her, and devoted themselves to their homes and children like good house-fraus.

"To-morrow is Christmas, the birthday of the dear Christ!" said the children one to another, as they stood, a happy group, on the doorsteps of the old house.

"I hope the dear Christ-child will not forget me!" said little Gretchen Meyer, wistfully. "I have tried so hard to be a comfort to the mother!"

"And so have I!" cried Rudolph, her cousin. "Dost think He will remember tbat I have kept head of my class, Gretchen?"

"He remembers everything," said crippled Elsé, softly. I am not strong like thee, Gretchen, or quick like thee, Rudolph, but I do what I can."

"And so do I! And so do I!" cried Hilda and Lottchen and Carl together.

"Does the Christ-child remember the cross and sad ones like Mère Josephine?" asked Rudolph, gazing with blue eyes to the top window, where the lonely woman still sat with folded hands.

"Hush!" whispered Elsé, "she may hear thee. I do not think that Mère Josephine has ever had a gift."

"Perhaps that is why she is sad," said Lottchen. "It does not seem right that the Christ-child should forget the sad ones."

"I tell you what we will do!" cried Elsé. "We will ask the Blessed Christ to remember Mère Josephine also."

"Yes! yes!" cried the others. "We will! we will!"

"I want no Christmas gift, children," said Mère Josephine, who, unnoticed by the little ones, had slipped among the group. "Christmas is not for the miserable. I have had no Christmas for twenty years."

The children shrank back. This grey-haired, sad-faced woman awed them. She was so unlike their fair-haired, smiling mothers. One by one, they crept away and quite alone, Mère Josephine stepped into the now silent street.

* * * * *

Christmas morning dawned, bright and beautiful, for sad and happy alike. The children's simple words had strangely roused the troubled soul of Mère Josephine, and as she busied hereself with her daily work, and completed the mending of a delicate strip of lace, her heart throbbed, and the colour came and went in her faded cheek. But as she passed into the street, with her bundle of mended lace hidden under her dark cloak, to those who knew her she was still the same dull, sad woman as she had ever been to them, and they shrugged their shoulders, saying: "Mère Josephine is working as usual this Christmas, then!"

It was sunset before she returned to her room, weary but calm. To her tired eyes, the room seemed strangely unfamiliar—brightness penetrated every corner. And on her poor bed lay—Mère Josephine gazed, and gazed—a little child! Yes, a little child, whose fair head had nestled on her pillow in baby contentment. One tiny hand held a Christmas rose-bud. Something like a smile flitted over the face of Mère Josephine, and when the baby eyes opened, and the little one stretched out his arms to be held, Mère Josephine did not repulse him, but carried him down the creaking oak stairs into the courtyard, where the women were chatting together.

"Neighbours," she said, and her voice trembled as she spoke, "can you tell me aught of this little one? He was sleeping in my room.

The mothers stared, and smiled. It was strange to see Mère Josephine holding a baby-boy in her arms. Then Frau Meyer spoke—

"No, indeed, Mère Josephine," she said, "he is not from these parts. He is a beautiful boy, like a fairy child."

The women held him by turns in their strong arms, and searched his little garments for a mark or name, but could find nothing to identify the little stranger, so gave him back to Mère Josephine, with the remark: "He must belong to thy people, Mère Josephine, and they have sent him to thee, thinking thee a rich woman."

"No, no; I have no one in the wide world that belongs to me!" cried Mère Josephine, and she turned away that they might not see her tears.

"Here come the children!" cried Frau Meyer. "They may tell thee. Children often know more than the grown ones."

Elsé, Rudolph, Gretchen, and Lottchen gathered round Mère Josephine's grey gown to kiss the little one, that, unconscious of all this excitement, was smiling happily on all. Elsé suddenly clapped her hands. "Oh, Mère Josephine!" she cried, "he is the Christ-child's gift to thee! Thou hast been remembered, too!"

"The Christ-child's gift! The Christ-child's gift!" chimed in the others, and quickly joining hands they danced merrily round the little one.

Frau Meyer laughed. "Ah, the children, they have strange thoughts! Well, Mère Josephine, wilt thou keep this gift, or send it to the Foundling Hospital?"

For answer, Mère Josephine covered the little face with kisses, and tears too, happy tears.

* * * * *

And Noel, as Mère Josephine called the little one, grew like the Christ-child of old, in wisdom and stature, while his tender heart and gentle temper endeared him to all. And Mère Josephine was no longer sorrowful for little Noel's sake. The children forgot their fear of her, and would gather round her knee, listening with delight to the old stories and songs that fell from Mère Josephine's lips as she sat at work.

* * * * *

It was never known who the little one really was. What does it matter?—Little Noel was a heaven-sent gift.

M. G. PARSONS.

The Valley Way.

Going home the Valley way,
Through the fields of clover,
Narrow lanes with trails of hay,
'Cross whose path a brooklet lay.
Where I pass over.
From afar a candle's beam
Shoots its glint across the stream,
As I pass over.

Candle at a window's pane,
As I pass over,
Sends its ray adown the lane;
Aching feet are strong again,
As I pass over.
Faces at the door to meet,
Prayer and song from voices sweet,
Hands to clasp and lips to greet,
As I pass over.

Going home the Valley way,
Shall I pass over?
When these thinning locks are grey,
When the sun shall close the day,
Shall I pass over?
When I cleave the darker night,
If my soul discerns aright,
I shall pass over.

Hearts of earth! forego your care,
As I pass over.
Friends will set a beacon there,
Voices join in song and prayer,
As I pass over.
Odours sweet my steps shall guide,
And the stteamlet's song abide,
Till, with rarer sight supplied,
I shall pass over.

H. M.

New Books for Sunday School Teachers and Others.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION continues its happy custom of giving its subscribers a new year's present in the shape of a batch of new books. The most important of these is "THE HELPER," edited by our friend, the Rev. W. G. Tarrant. It is a volume full of good things. There are sixteen Bible lessons by the Editor; a series of nature lessons from Ruskin; eight lessons on Bible Homes by Mr. Ruddle, as well as suggestive papers on the art of teaching by Mr. Felix Taylor and Rev. J. J. Wright. Altogether a useful volume for the teacher's library.

Mr. J. Crowthers Hirst gives us a second series of "HALF-HOURS WITH THE PARABLES," each parable set forth in a Comment, a Poem, and a Story. The book provides a series of ready-made lessons for teachers who have but little time for quiet study.

"YOUNG DAYS," edited by the Rev. J. J. Wright, more than maintains its high character, and we are quite sure that the children in our homes, as well as the children in our schools, could have no more delightful book put into their hands.

We commend also to Sunday School workers a little collection of "ADDRESSES TO CHILDREN," and a book of "PRAYERS FOR USE OF SUPERINTENDENTS." Both will be found helpful at times by those who have no gift for these things in themselves.

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